

Institutional Management



A DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE AT
THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

BY

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THE physician or layman who is appointed as superintendent of a hospital, fills a large position and generally divides his responsibilities with a corps of expert assistants to whom are assigned certain duties. On the other hand, the nurse who is superintendent of a small hospital, while occupying a more humble position, has many complicated questions and responsibilities thrust upon her which she must personally meet. She is obliged to meet peculiar emergencies, not of a medical or surgical nature, with which she is familiar, but those which are met with in households outside of hospitals. For example, the non-appearance of the cook in the early morning. This event is usually unexpected and comes under the head of household emergencies. Fortunate is the hospital which has for its superintendent a woman who has received a good, practical home training, for it is she who will arise in the morning to cook the breakfast for the household. It is also well to have some knowledge of the care of a furnace and boiler, so that one may act with some intelligence in the absence of the engineer, if an emergency should arise.

The importance of some previous knowledge of institution management before assuming the responsibility of running one is too well known by those who have taken up this work without any special training, except as nurse in charge of a ward or department.

The nurses who fill these positions are chosen because of possessing special qualities. If in charge of a ward for some time and showing ability as a good manager and executive, she is promoted along these lines and put in charge of one of the larger departments of the hospital, as, for instance, the Operating or Out-Patient Department, which gives her a larger field to exercise her ability in; even so, here her experience is still limited as it necessarily must be in a large hospital. The different problems which arise in her department are usually taken out of her hands and settled by some one higher in authority.

Superintendents of many small hospitals and some large ones have come to their positions without previous executive experience and have consequently made many mistakes. While others probably have had to suffer for these mistakes, the experience has been of value in teaching them what to avoid in the future.

According to modern ideas, in order to follow out any vocation successfully, whether a branch of a profession or trade, special and systematic instruction is necessary.

Throughout Canada and the United States in the last ten or fifteen years, there has been a rapid increase of small hospitals, many of them of elaborate construction, fully equipped and supplied with every detail, models in themselves, so that the work of caring for the sick

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may be done in the most efficient manner. Hospital corporations are usually made up of a body of enthusiastic men and women who have spent time and money in scheming and planning to build a hospital where the town's sick shall be skilfully cared for. It stands to reason that the people are most interested in what they are pleased to term "their hospital," and most zealous for its welfare; therefore, they are deliberate and careful in their choice of a head to fill the position of superintendent.

Hospital positions are not popular, and it is often difficult to persuade the woman desired as superintendent to accept. The woman who is in demand for such positions must be a graduate from a hospital and training school of good standing. She should be an educated woman. She should be on the young side of middle age and mentally and physically strong. She should be endowed with common sense to a great degree; she should be self-reliant, tactful, have executive ability and possess a pleasing personality. She will be expected to practice economy in all departments. Her ideas must be more practical than theoretical. She should be a skilled nurse, having knowledge of all branches in nursing; a good teacher and disciplinarian, as she will be expected to take part in the instruction of the nurses. The women who are usually recommended for hospital superintendencies are:

First—Those who have filled such positions and are looking for larger fields.

Second—Those who have acted as assistants or head nurses in small hospitals, where they have received most valuable preparatory courses and should be well fitted, after one or two years' experience, for promotion.

Third—Nurses who have acted as as-

sistants to the superintendents of large hospital training schools.

Fourth—Nurses who have had charge of wards or other departments in large hospitals.

The duties and responsibilities of the superintendent of a small hospital are many and complex, relating as they do to the patients, trustees and hospital staff and the training school. Directly under her care is the kitchen, laundry, storerooms, buildings and grounds. As a rule she holds a position of trust, and great confidence is placed in the powers of administration which she is supposed to possess. Members of the executive board are too busy with their own affairs to be troubled with the small details of hospital management, therefore much is left for her to decide. To fill the position in a satisfactory manner, with credit to herself and her Alma Mater, she should possess a thorough and practical knowledge of all hospital departments, such as the management of the wards, and, with her assistant, have some oversight of the nursing, management of the household department, hiring and discharging of help, admission and discharge of patients, some knowledge of bookkeeping of the daily running expenses, the cost per capita of each patient, the purchasing of medical and surgical supplies, provisions and household supplies, etc.

If she has never had experience in purchasing on a large scale, she may, because of the seeming extravagance and cost, be tempted to buy in small quantities. For the same reason she may fail to replace household necessities which break or wear out, such as dishes, cooking utensils, ward utensils and linen. Such apparent economies are, in the end, extravagancies.

The superintendent of a small hospital is expected to be very much in evidence at all times. She usually attends to telephone calls in person when inquiries are made concerning patients. Personal interviews with friends of patients are many in the course of a day; in fact, she is on call like the physician, night and day. A superintendent whom I know was approached by one of the townspeople who asked if she were not very tired in the morning, as it was thought that it was her duty to remain up all night to attend to the sick patients. There are many other details of the day's work too numerous to mention here.

As a rule, hospital positions are not sought for by graduate nurses. About four per cent take up nursing with that point in view, but are apt to change their minds when graduated and do private nursing. If approached on this subject many will say that they wish to try private nursing first for a little while and plan to take up institution work later on, but they usually keep on with their special vocation, fearing to assume the responsibilities of a hospital position. Some feel that they cannot afford the institution work as they have family obligations. Women who have been doing private nursing and accept hospital positions rarely return to the field of private work again and after all prefer the certainties of institutional life. Even if not so remunerative, financially, there is a great deal to be said in its favor. Many valuable and lasting friendships have been made by those who have filled such positions. The people who are interested in the hospital become interested in you and will go a long way to help smooth out your difficulties and are ever ready to give the necessary moral support. The hospital staff is usually made

up of a hard-working body of men, very enthusiastic and on the alert for the latest methods of treatment in medicine and surgery, and are, in a certain measure, dependent on the nurse who is the head of the institution for co-operation along the lines of advancement, if she is a graduate of a large hospital. She will be consulted on important matters concerning the welfare of the patients and the management of the hospital. She will sometimes receive credit for knowing more than she really does.

In order to come up to these expectations the graduate nurse should be thoroughly qualified to fill such a position and should avail herself of the opportunities now offered. Not to be overlooked is the position as assistant in a small hospital which serves as a splendid preparatory course for the larger position.

At the request of the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools an excellent course in hospital economics was organized. This course had for its purpose the preparation of trained nurses who had the necessary qualifications for teachers in training schools for nurses. Its aim is eventually to attain uniformity in curriculum in training schools and supply trained superintendents to take charge of hospitals and training schools. Before entering, the applicant must have had four months' experience in private nursing.

The Boston City Hospital Training School for Nurses gives an optional course of studies to its pupils in the third year, in which are included one or two weeks with the assistant matron in institution work.

The broadening of the nurses' education along the lines of institutional management had been under consideration in

the Massachusetts General Hospital for some time. It was first put into operation November 1, 1908. The course is one of six months in institutional management, given to a few of its graduates at a time. Those who are especially qualified for this work and have done private nursing are preferred. The students live outside of the hospital. They are expected to be on duty every day except Sunday, from 8 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock in the evening. No tuition is charged for this course and lunches are provided by the hospital. The course is one largely of observation of the practical running of the different departments of the hospital.

The pupil will observe the methods by which the various departments of the hospital are controlled. The following is an outline of some of the subjects taken up in the course:

Admitting Office—

- Meeting applicants.
- Weeding out unsuitable cases.
- Making rates.
- Newspaper reporters.
- Lawyers and records.
- Advising discharged patients.
- Relations to other hospitals and institutions.

Superintendent—

- Requisitions for supplies.
- Purchasing supplies.
- Reports of heads of departments.
- Emergencies.
- Correspondence.

Bookkeeper—

- Outline of bookkeeping methods peculiar to hospitals.
- Pay rolls.
- Statistics.

Librarian—

- Filing and cataloging records.

Matron—

- General housekeeping methods:
 - Care of ceilings.
 - Care of walls.
 - Care of floors.

Care of utensils.

Hiring and discharging help.

Laundry—

- Machines and their uses.
- Making soaps and solutions.
- Washing and sterilizing surgical gauze.
- Laundry accounting.
- Planning week's work.

Kitchen—

- Handling large orders.
- Practical methods of preparing food.
- Care of milk and cream.
- Giving out supplies.
- Requisitions on store.
- Sending meals to departments.

Store—

- Receipting for stores.
- Accounting for stores.
- Examining quality.
- Filling requisitions.
- Temperatures and methods of keeping meats, vegetables, fruits, eggs, butter, etc.

Cutting meats.

Mechanical Department—

- Making rounds with engineer to observe:
 - Heating,
 - Ventilating,
 - Lighting,
 - Repairs.

Training School—

- Relation to Superintendent and Assistants, Matron and Staff.
- Department and ward administration.
- Equipment and care of nurses' rooms.
- Admission of pupils.
- Assignment of nurses.

Apothecary—

- Purchasing and care of drugs and sundries.
- Issuing supplies.
- Care of combustible and explosive supplies.
- Purchasing and care of rubber goods.

(Discussion.)

The President, Dr. Richard Cabot—
Have you anything to add upon the working of this course in the Massachusetts General Hospital, Dr. Washburn?

Dr. F. A. Washburn, Superintendent
Massachusetts General Hospital: Mr.

Chairman—I came here to-night to listen and learn. I am not prepared to speak. There is very little to add to what Miss McCrae has said. We have at present one pupil who is taking this course. We do not intend to have more than two at any one time. The nurse who is now with us is a graduate of our own school. For a good many months she was in charge of our Out-Patient Department, and was then superintendent of a small hospital. With this experience we have been able to trust her with greater responsibility and to advance her more rapidly than we should expect to do with pupils in the future. We have placed her in immediate charge of certain departments of the hospital for short periods of time, at the hospital's convenience, to fill temporary vacancies caused by illness and for other reasons. Such opportunities as these we cannot always expect to give, nor would it always be wise for the hospital to attempt it. In this particular instance it has been a valuable experience for the nurse.

The course is almost wholly practical in its nature. There have been informal talks and discussions of the different subjects, given by the superintendent, assistant superintendents and the heads of the different departments, but no attempt has been made to give set lectures. I think that this course cannot fail to be

of the greatest value to a woman who intends to take up hospital administration as a life work. If I were to go into further details I should simply repeat what Miss McCrae has said.

Chairman—Is anything of this kind being done anywhere else?

Dr. Washburn—I understand that Dr. Babcock is giving a very excellent course on institutional management at Grace Hospital, Detroit. There is a theoretical course at Columbia and I believe Miss Goodrich is doing something of the kind at Bellevue. As far as I know there are no text books published on this subject as yet.

Dr. Patch—There is a text book covering this subject. Miss Aikens has recently published a book which goes into the matter of hospital management and the duties of the head nurse and all kindred topics quite extensively and is very interesting. Question. May I ask is this course open to graduates other than the Massachusetts General?

Dr. Washburn—The course is open only to graduates of the Massachusetts General Hospital now. Whether it will be open to others later on I do not know. It probably will be.

Chairman—If there is no further discussion on this paper, we will proceed. Miss Anderson has the second paper of the evening.



